



# School District Consolidation

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An Overview of State Action

# Number of School Districts 1937 - 1999

| Year   | No. of Districts |
|--------|------------------|
| ■ 1937 | ■ 119,001        |
| ■ 1959 | ■ 40,520         |
| ■ 1970 | ■ 17,995         |
| ■ 1999 | ■ 14,928         |

# Reasons not to Consolidate

- Loss of economic draw.
- Loss of community identity.
- Large schools vs.. small schools.
  - ◆ Climate
  - ◆ Bureaucracy
- Commute for students/transportation costs.
  - ◆ Decreased level of student involvement
- No true cost savings/improvement of services.
- Political climate of community

# Optimal size of school and district

Differing opinions...

1995 Study by Duncombe, Miner, and  
Ruggiero suggests

- Ninety percent of cost savings are exhausted at 1,500 students.

# State Activity Re: Consolidation

## ARKANSAS

- 1983 - 1999 districts decreased from 370 to 310.
- More consolidations anticipated due to perceived cost savings and Supreme Court ruling mandating equal and efficient education for all students.
- Governor Huckabee proposes legislation to consolidate all school districts under 500 students.

# State Activity Re: Consolidation

## NORTH DAKOTA

- 1970 - 1994 districts decreased from 256 to 186.
- In 1994 closed schools had 47-97 students.
- Consolidated schools had 75-677.
- Most efficient districts have 600 - 5,000 students.
- Fifteen districts average 4,400 students the rest average 225.

# State Activity Re: Consolidation

## ILLINOIS

- 1980 - 2002 districts decreased from 1,001 to 893.
  - ◆ 51% through Dissolution/Annexation
  - ◆ 38% through Consolidation
  - ◆ 11% through Conversion, Deactivation, or Cooperative.

# State Activity Re: Consolidation

## KANSAS

- 1945 - 1984 districts decreased from 8,000 to 303.
- January 2003 recommendation to reduce further to approximately 40 Regional Education Districts.
- Legislation passed to dissolve current unified school districts and restructure along county boundaries by 2005.



# State Activity Re: Consolidation

## KANSAS

- Develop plan to phase in RED concept over a 5 to 10 year period. *4 years 1-2 share 3-4 gov 5-7 Reduce schools as necessary*
- Insure appropriate and qualified instructional staffing.
- Provide for districts with special circumstances. *geographic isolation*

# **Trends in Consolidation Process**

- Incentives work better than mandates.
- Community engagement is important.
- Cost savings may or may not be significant based on economies of scale.
- Cultures of different districts may help or impede the consolidation process.
- Geographic location and topography may determine feasibility of consolidation.



# For more information

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